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"By Whose Authority: Issues of Performativity, Identity and Transformative Writing in a
Humanities M.A. Practicum"

Abstract

This essay explores questions of identity and authority in light of my own unique practicum experience with the Sudbury & Manitoulin Workforce Partnerships Board (SMWPB). Charged with the task of updating and reorganizing the organization's website content in order to help it maintain a visible public profile, I began questioning whether I was surreptitiously creating a new, perhaps *undesired*, image for the organization through my writing, thereby causing me to consider the extent to which written language can be used in a process of image actualization, as well as engage in an exploration of the types of claims to authority that could justify (or condemn) my actions.

J.L. Austin's theory of performativity—the idea that men and women are capable of performing actions through their utterances—is utilized to frame this discussion, which proceeds to an analysis of the various identities—practicum student, graduate student, humanities scholar—that I might legitimately claim ownership of to justify my (perhaps imaginary) attempt at transforming the organization in my own image. The essay concludes with the assertion that perhaps many of my points could have been rendered moot rather simply, but that they warranted discussion in keeping with the explorative themes outlined in the Humanities M.A. Program's Practicum Handbook.